UNITED NATIONS

DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Information Note

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is observed by the United Nations on 29 November each year in accordance with mandates given by the General Assembly in resolutions 32/40 B of 2 December 1977 and 34/65 D of 12 December 1979.

Special commemorative activities are organized by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

The date of 29 November was chosen because of its significance to the Palestinian people. On that day in 1947 the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which came to be known as the Partition Resolution. Particular importance is attached to this year's commemoration since it will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the resolution which provided for the establishment of a "Jewish State" and an "Arab State", in Palestine, with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime. Of the two States intended by this resolution, only one, Israel, has come into being.

The Palestinian people, who now number almost 7.2 million, are scattered over many countries. About 900,000 live in Israel. Another 2.6 million live in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, part of which are now under Palestinian self-rule. Of the remainder, many still live in refugee camps and in neighbouring Arab States.

The International Day of Solidarity has traditionally provided an opportunity for the international community to focus its attention on the fact that the question of Palestine is still unresolved and that the Palestinian people still has to attain and exercise its inalienable rights as defined by the General Assembly, namely, the right to self-determination and to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return.

Since September 1993, a number of important and positive developments have taken place in the peace process, in particular the mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the signing by the two parties of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and a number of subsequent agreements, which led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from most of the Gaza Strip and major towns and other parts of the West Bank, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to administer those areas pending further negotiations toward a final settlement, and Palestinian elections to a legislative council and the presidency of the Authority. However, negotiations on Israeli withdrawal from the remaining areas and the difficult final status issues (which are the core of the conflict and include Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees) have been stalemated since a brief beginning in May 1996.

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While welcoming the positive developments and expressing support for the peace process, the international community voiced increasing concern at the continued aggravation of tension and violence in the area during 1997, which was exacerbated by delays and obstacles in the negotiations, the resumption by Israel of land confiscation and settlements construction, and the further serious deterioration of the Palestinian economy due to prolonged military closures, which threatened to undermine the peace process itself. Accordingly, the international community stressed the urgent need for the resumption of the negotiating process in all its aspects and an end to unilateral actions and rapid progress towards the attainment of Palestinian rights, particularly the right to self-determination, and towards concrete improvement in the Palestinian economy and living conditions.

The mobilization of international support for the full implementation of the agreements reached and of international assistance for development of the Palestinian economy continues to be an important focus in the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

In response to the call of the United Nations, each year an increasing number of activities are undertaken by Governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and others to observe the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. These activities include the publication of special messages, the organization of meetings, the dissemination of visual material and the screening of films.

At the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People each year holds a solemn meeting to observe the Day of Solidarity. As November 29 falls on the week-end, this year's meeting will be held on Monday, 1 December. Commemorative meetings are also held at the United Nations offices at Geneva and Vienna and at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

At the solemn meeting held in New York by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, speakers include the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, and the representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations. A message from the President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization is also read at the meeting. NGOs are also invited to attend, and a spokesperson for the international community of NGOs accredited to the Committee addresses the meeting.

A special Bulletin containing the texts of the statements and messages received on the Solidarity Day is published annually by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Other activities organized in New York in connection with the observance of the Day include a Palestinian cultural exhibit sponsored by the Committee and presented by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, and the screening of films throughout the week, in which the observance of the Solidarity Day falls.

The United Nations Information Centres in the various countries are available to assist Governments, NGOs and others wishing to organize special activities connected with the Day by providing information and documentation.

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